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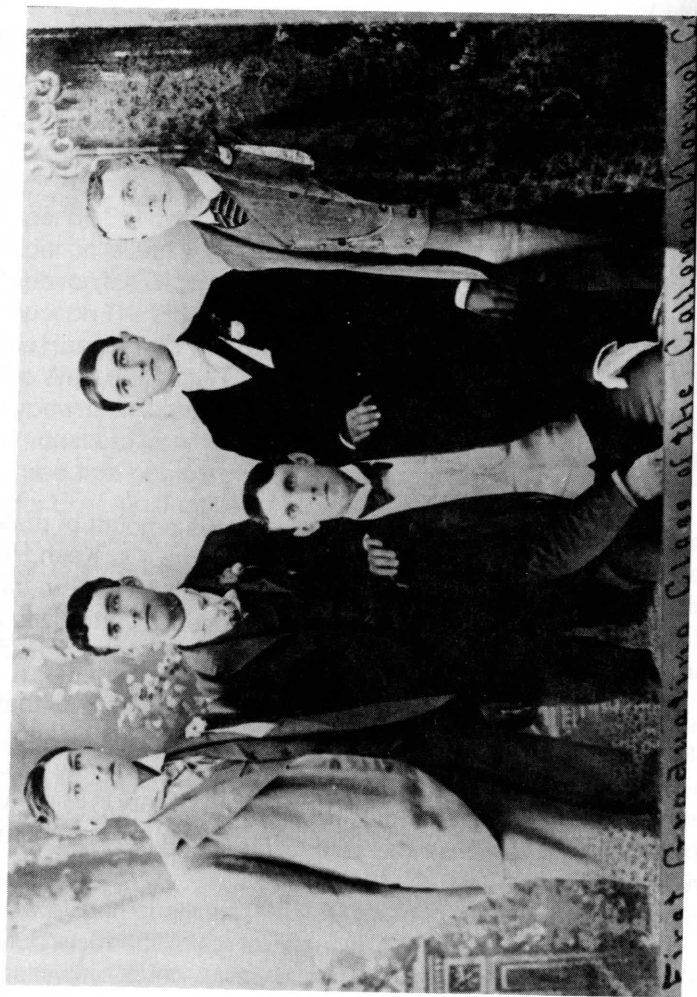
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Calloway Normal College, Kirksey, Kentucky

Class of 1900

Left to Right: Brent Houston, Riley Miller, Rainey Wells, principal
Hermon Gingles, Gene Roach

Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Hugh Gingles

HISTORY OF KIRKSEY KENTUCKY (HIGHLIGHTS)

Brown Tucker

Kirksey became the name of a village ten miles northwest of Murray, Calloway County, Kentucky officially on July 14, 1871. Appropriately named for the Kirksey family, Steven Franklin Kirksey, owner of a general store and also named for the first postmaster. Local citizens had previously held several meetings on the selection of a name for the newly authorized postoffice to determine whether Reidville (after the Reid family) or Rosedale (said to be inspired by a profusion of roses which covered the roadsides and yard fences). A vote resulted in the selection of Rosedale by the narrow margin of a single vote. Actually, everyone was under the impression Rosedale would be the name until an order from Washington designated the new postoffice Kirksey. Elder citizens of Kirksey say the error was due to a mixup in correspondence.

First Location

Best evidence indicates the new Kirksey postoffice was set up in the building formerly used by J. N. Radford who operated the Radford postoffice from May 14, 1857, to September 4, 1860. This site was located near the Lawson Radford home place about one-half mile northwest of the Kirksey crossroads. It is said that Mr. Jesse Wrather purchased the building and stock of goods and moved same to the northeast corner of the Kirksey crossroads where the postoffice has remained in close proximity until the present. The date Mr. Wrather moved the building is not known, however, he had purchased the new site in 1866. Mr. Wrather succeeded Mr. Kirksey as postmaster on August 11, 1873. To relocate the postoffice was a wise decision as the crossroads extended travel in four directions. Citizens agreed to dig a well at the southwest corner of the intersection for their own use and to furnish water for teams traveling in the area.

Early Settlers

Records show Mr. Hermon Bowman entered lands one and one-half miles west of Kirksey on July 17, 1827. It is said that the first log house constructed in the Kirksey area was at the Bowman site. Other early settlers who entered land near the Kirksey crossroads were: Elijah Hurt on December 4, 1830; Robert Ragsdale on December 8, 1829; Joseph Gray on November 14, 1831. Others were Daniel Frizzell, William Gray, Andrew Smith, and Henry Thomas. David Reid operated a shop and feed store and "Jim" McCallon operated a blacksmith shop near the crossroads at an early date.



Kirksey Landmark - Creekmur's Shop, 1903

Left to Right: J. A. Creekmur, owner, Wade Creekmur, Moss Cunningham
Mrs. J. A. Creekmur, Thelma Creekmur, Rexie Creekmur, Bertie Creekmur

Schools

Calloway Normal College - Established and construction finished in 1897 with Rainey T. Wells as Director. The school year was in operation in 1898. Teachers at the college included: Miss M. Cole, Walter Crisp, Miss Nola Floyd, Ommie Ginles, Rainey T. Wells, Mr. Mac Boyd, William Johnston, and Alvis Edwards. Some of these teachers also taught at local school districts.

A subscription school for elementary grades became a part of the college with students paying a fifty cent per month fee. August, 1912, the Kirksey school district assumed control of the buildings and grounds. The last college class to attend is said to have ended in 1912. Records of the Calloway Normal College are not available, therefore, lists of students who attended are not known. Several students who did attend or graduate distinguished themselves in several fields. Carlos Brewer born in Graves County near the northwest corner of Calloway County graduated with the Class of 1906-07 and rose to the rank of Major General, U.S. Army.¹ Harold Gingles also retired from the U.S. Army as a Major General. Col. Lake Miller rose through the ranks along with others of lesser commissioned rank and saw distinguished service in wartime. Dr. E. B. Houston graduated in the Class of 1900 (teacher's course), principal of Calloway Normal College 1903-04, graduated Louisville Medical College 1907.² Dr. R. P. Crawford attended 1898-1900.³

Kirksey School

With the demise of Calloway Normal College, elementary grades continued to be taught. High school classes through the junior year were offered in 1915. Students finished their fourth year at Murray. 1920 saw the completion of a new two-story brick building and the first full year of class graduated in May, 1924. The top floor of this building was soon removed with a gymnasium and class rooms added onto the west side of the ground floor.

1937 saw the construction of a new and enlarged facility designed to furnish space for elementary and high school grades in a more comfortable setting. The high school in a county consolidation moved to Murray in 1960 leaving the elementary grades at Kirksey until 1974 when all Calloway County elementary schools were consolidated into three separate facilities located throughout Calloway County.

Physicians

Dr. J. T. Gingles established the first regular practice at Kirksey after graduating from Louisville Medical School in 1871. He practiced for one year in Texas before moving to Kirksey with his bride in 1873. The Gingles family has a long record of achievement in the medical profession. Dr. J.

V. Starks practiced longer at Kirksey beginning in 1907 and continuing until his death. A number of physicians have at one time or another practiced here: Dr. Otis Gingles, 1896; Dr. Hunter Gingles, 1916; Dr. Clopton; Dr. Henry Davenport; Dr. A. V. Usher; Dr. Ray Starks; Dr. Lee Smith (who practiced at Backusburg) and Dr. H. H. Boggess, V.D. who also lived near Kirksey.

Kirksey Bank

Established in 1910 with Bob Williams as cashier. It ceased operations in 1921. The only other information available is a financial statement issued June 30, 1917. Resources listed are: Loans and discounts - \$28,508.36; Overdrafts - \$358.06; Cash - \$2,991.85; Due from other banks - \$20,187.97; Furniture and fixtures - \$3,202.68; Total - \$55,248.92. Liabilities - Capital Stock - \$15,000.00; Surplus - \$1,500.00; Undivided profit - \$1,187.19; Deposits - \$37,561.73. Officers are listed as: President - W. P. Dulaney, Cashier - R. L. Ross, Directors W. P. Dulaney, R. L. Ross, T. A. James, L. E. Radford, Ulous Cunningham, C. E. Clark, Sam Cain, F. H. Guier, and R. L. Ross. "Jim" Alexander maintained a real estate office in the building.

Postmasters

Steven Franklin Kirksey became postmaster on July 14, 1871. He was succeeded by Jesse Wrather on August 11, 1873; James Hatcher, February 13, 1874; George Duncan, March 24, 1880; J. Wrather, March 14, 1881; John H. Keys, March 7, 1882; Sidney Broach, January 19, 1893; W. P. Dulaney, November 27, 1897; Harmon Jones, December 19, 1914; George Marine, November 4, 1920; Urban Clark, January 17, 1928; Virgie Clark, December 21, 1929; Laverne Doores acting postmaster May 31, 1967 and appointed postmaster on April 17, 1971.

Organizations

Masonic Lodge organized in 1909, active until 1959; Eastern Star, 1912, active about eight years; Woodmen of the World, 1904, still active.

Largest Family

William Henry Killebrew reared probably the largest family in Calloway history. Mr. Killebrew, a great-grandfather of the writer was born March 12, 1818. A wood carver and brick mason by trade, he is said to have constructed brickwork for the first courthouse built with brick in Murray. It is also said the Grandfather Killebrew never owned a single piece of real estate. About 1835, he married Nancy Chunn (1818-1863). To this union were born twenty-one sons. There were no still births or twins. Among those that lived in Calloway County and reared families of their own were: William J., Henry, Columbus, John (Brink), Levi, Thomas, James, Daniel, and Elijah. Grandmother Chunn's headstone in Ashbury Cemetery bears the inscription

"mother of 21 boys". William H. Killebrew's last wife was Sarah Millisa Briton. Six girls and one boy were born to this union: Paulina, Lillie, Margie, Emma, Willie, Junie, and Samuel. None of the children of either marriage survive. The Killebrew family lived at several locations near Kirksey.

Business Men

In addition to the names already given, the following have owned or operated stores, restaurants, barber shops, etc. at Kirksey: Charlie Broach, Mr.———Landon, John Huie, Billie Jones, H. A. Dixon, Mack Alexander, T. Casey, Jim and Frank McCallon, George Marine, John Sanders, Carlin Riley, Kay Edwards, Coy Chester, Killebrew & Youngblood, Terry Cochran, Dennis Sanders, Wilford Dunn, Benny Stokes, Dock Adams, Ogie Greenfield, Brooks Watson & Orbon McCallon, Hiram Williams, Mr.———Debakery (dry cleaners), Hal Smith, Paul D. Jones, Victor Oliver, Myers Nix, W. P. Dulaney, Sam Bourland, Will Cousans, Mr.———Harrison, Stanley Usher, Smith & Garland and possibly others. Present storekeepers are Carl Usrey and Maurice Jones. Several sawmills, feedmills, and car repair shops have been in operation over the years. Nix & Carson, Wrather & Sons, and Broach & Hill operated tobacco factories.

Summary

Kirksey has been Kirksey for 114 years. Citizens who have come and gone tell you that Kirksey has an atmosphere distinctly its own. One Kirkseyite just about hit the nail on the head when he said "even cheese and crackers with a Coke tastes different at Kirksey than any other place on earth."

NOTE: The writer had several interviews before April 30, 1960 with Mabel Starks (Mrs. J. V.) and Eunnicc Carson (Mrs. Elmus) both now deceased, and we gratefully acknowledge their assistance in the preparation of this history.

1. Brewer Family, May 7, 1985.

2. Calloway County Gazette, Special Edition, Section Three, Friday, January 6, 1911, p. 7.

3. Ibid.

Gen. Gingles and Lake Miller - personal knowledge of the writer